

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please amend the specification as follows:

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 1, line 26 with the word “There” ending on page 2, line 12 with the word “manner”, as follows:

There has been known an optical fiber connecting device of this type comprising a body with cavity, a fiber-element securing member held in the cavity of the body in a manner that it can be opened and closed, and an actuating member mounted in the cavity of the body in a manner that it can be moved to open and close the fiber-element securing member (see, for example, Patent Document 1 ([JP Pat. No. 2713309](#))). In the body are formed a pair of passages which are in concentric and aligned with each other, and being opened in the outer surfaces thereof and communicated with the cavity. The uncoated fiber elements of the pair of optical fibers are introduced in the corresponding passages and are guided into the fiber-element securing member. In conducting the connection operation, the actuating member is completely pushed into the cavity of the body to apply pressure to the fiber-element securing member which is opening at a position where the uncoated fiber elements of the pair of optical fibers are abut together at their ends and to move the fiber-element securing member to the closed position. Accordingly, the fiber-element securing member strongly secures the uncoated fiber elements of the two optical fibers in an abutment condition with the application of a required pressure and, thus, the pair of optical fibers are permanently connected together in a concentric manner.

On page 2, please delete the paragraphs that start on line 13 with the words “Patent Document 1” and end on line 14 with the words “Publication of Japanese Patent No. 2713309”.

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 2, lines 15-30, beginning with the word “With” and ending with the word “2”, as follows:

With the optical fiber connection device disclosed in the Patent Document 1, the optical fibers that are to be connected are uncovered at their ends during the fiber connection operation over the regions longer than the lengths that are to be held by the fiber-element securing member. Therefore, the pair of optical fibers securely connected together through the optical fiber

connecting device have their uncoated fiber element portions and the neighboring sheath portions that are received in their corresponding passages without being substantially locked. If the tensile action or twisting action is exerted on the optical fibers, the tensile stress or the twisting stress is concentrated on the uncoated fiber element portions that are arranged in the passages of the body without being locked, and the uncoated fiber elements may be damaged or broken, which may cause an optical loss. In order to avoid the stress from concentrating on the uncoated fiber elements, therefore, an optical fiber connecting device has been proposed comprising a sheath holding mechanism capable of securing the sheath portions of the optical fibers onto the body on the outer side of the fiber-element securing member (see, for example, Patent Document 2 (US Pat. No. 5,638,477)).

On page 3, please delete the paragraphs that start on line 1 with the words “Patent Document 2” and end on line 2 with the words “Specification of United States Patent No. 5,638,477”.

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 3, lines 3-19, beginning with the word “In” and ending with the word “applicant”, as follows:

In the optical fiber connecting device disclosed in the Patent Document 2, a pair of slots are formed in the body separately from the cavity so as to be communicated with a pair of passages in the body, and clip members having a U-shape in cross section are mounted in the slots in a manner to be displaced. Each clip member has a pair of arms facing each other maintaining a predetermined gap, and the sheath portion of the optical fiber arranged in the passage is received between these arms with the application of pressure. When the optical fibers are to be inserted in the passages of the body, the clip members are placed at positions where their both arms will not interfere with the sheaths of the optical fibers. After the uncoated fiber elements of the pair of optical fibers are held by the fiber-element securing member, the slip members are completely pushed into the corresponding slots in the body, whereby the sheath portions of the optical fibers in the passages are inserted into between the two arms of the clip members while being compressed, and the sheath portions are secured to the body. The sheath holding mechanism in the optical fiber connection device has also been disclosed in the

specification of Japanese Patent Application No. 2002-240836 (see also US Patent Application No. 10/522,003), which is a prior application filed by the present applicant.

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 3, line 27 with the word “In” ending on page 4, line 11 with the word “element”, as follows:

In order to achieve the above object, the invention described ~~in claim 1~~ herein provides an optical fiber connecting device for connecting uncoated fiber elements of a pair of optical fibers with each other in an abutment condition, comprising a body, a fiber-element securing member supported on the body to be operable between a closed position for securely holding an uncoated fiber element of an optical fiber and an opened position for releasing the uncoated fiber element, an actuating member supported on the body to operate the fiber-element securing member from the opened position to the closed position, and a sheath holding mechanism capable of holding a sheath portion of the optical fiber, in a fixed state relative to the body, with the uncoated fiber element thereof being securely held by the fiber-element securing member, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the sheath holding mechanism includes an elastically deformable holding element provided in the actuating member; and that the holding element defines in the body a passage for guiding an optical fiber, and is elastically deformed due to a motion of the actuating member on the body for operating the fiber-element securing member toward the closed position, to press and hold a sheath portion of the optical fiber in the passage by an elastic restoring force of the holding element.

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 4, lines 20-24, beginning with the word “The” and ending with the word “arm”, as follows:

The invention described ~~in claim 2~~ herein provides an optical fiber connecting device according to ~~claim 1 that described above~~, wherein the holding element includes an elastic arm formed in the actuating member, the elastic arm including a fixed end part and a pressing part spaced away from the fixed end part for pressing the sheath portion of the optical fiber by an elastic restoring force of the elastic arm.

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 4, lines 27-32, beginning with the word “The” and ending with the word “therethrough”, as follows:

The invention described ~~in claim 3~~ herein provides an optical fiber connecting device according to ~~claim 2 that described above~~, wherein the elastic arm further includes an engaging part positioned between the fixed end part and the pressing part, the engaging part defining a constricted region in the passage for permitting an uncoated fiber element of the optical fiber to pass therethrough but for preventing the sheath portion of the optical fiber from passing therethrough.

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 5, lines 4-7, beginning with the word “The” and ending with the word “body”, as follows:

The invention described ~~in claim 4~~ herein provides an optical fiber connecting device according to ~~claim 3 that described above~~, wherein the engaging part of the elastic arm opens the constricted region in the passage as the elastic arm is elastically deformed due to the motion of the actuating member on the body.

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 5, lines 11-14, beginning with the word “The” and ending with the word “port”, as follows:

The invention described ~~in claim 5~~ herein provides an optical fiber connecting device according to ~~any one of claims 2 to 4 that described above~~, wherein the body includes an inlet port opening in an outer surface of the body and communicated with the passage, the pressing part of the elastic arm being arranged close to the inlet port.

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 5, lines 18-20, beginning with the word “The” and ending with the word “member”, as follows:

The invention described ~~in claim 6~~ herein provides an optical fiber connecting device according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5 that described above~~, wherein the holding element is integrally formed on the actuating member.

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 5, line 23 with the word “The” ending on page 6, line 2 with the word “element”, as follows:

The invention described ~~in claim 7~~ herein provides an optical fiber connecting device for connecting uncoated fiber elements of a pair of optical fibers with each other in an abutment condition, comprising a fiber-element securing member for securing an uncoated fiber element of an optical fiber, and a sheath holding mechanism capable of holding a sheath portion of the optical fiber, in a fixed state, with the uncoated fiber element thereof being secured by the fiber-element securing member, characterized in that the sheath holding mechanism includes a holding element elastically deformable independently from the fiber-element securing member; and that the holding element defines a passage for guiding an optical fiber outside of the fiber-element securing member, and presses and holds a sheath portion of the optical fiber in the passage by an elastic restoring force of the holding element.

Please delete the paragraph heading on page 8, line 8, and replace it with the paragraph heading as follows:

#### Mode for Carrying Out the Invention Detailed Description

Please delete the paragraph heading on page 23, line 1, entitled “Effect of the Invention.”

Please amend the paragraph starting on page 23, lines 2-8, beginning with the word “According” and ending with the word “applicability”, as follows:

As will be ~~obvious~~ apparent from the foregoing description, the present invention provides an optical fiber connecting device for connecting the uncoated fiber elements of a pair of optical fibers in an abutment condition, wherein the number of the constituent parts is decreased to simplify the fiber connection operation, the fiber connection operation is carried out without using any special tool, and a stable sheath-holding function is exhibited without affected by dimensional errors in the constituent parts.

On page 23, please delete the paragraphs that start on line 9 with the words “Description of Reference Numerals” and end on line 25 with the words “66 ... constricted region”.